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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the role of second language teachers in relation to the changing role of language departments at the university level. Of the many factors involved in setting up a successful language program, student participation and the role of the teacher are among the most important. The teacher's qualifications should reflect the changing requirements of the university language department, which are shaped by a number of factors, including: declining student enrollments; growing adult demand for language training; and growing demand for specialized language courses. These new demands should be viewed by the language teacher and the language department as a challenge that represents the key to survival and growth. (AM)

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Second Language Teaching in the Canadian University

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What I'm willing to admit, as a dean, is that if Second-Language Teaching in the Canadian university costs a lot of money, if it demands a great deal of effort and abnegation from everyone involved, if it doesn't seem to be at first hand very rewarding, I consider language teaching and learning one of the most fascinating human and intellectual experiences which I have gone through during my whole life.

I have been involved with second-language teaching for the last 25 years. Before that, I had learned to read and speak French, English and Spanish well enough, and had struggled with Greek and Latin in the humanistic tradition of yesterday. When you mention those facts nowadays, it either gives you good conscience or bad references!

For some people, second-language learning or teaching refers to experiences they want to forget. The usual reference is "my high school French ...," "my college English ..."

For me, second-language learning and teaching have always been a dynamic continuum in my life. Of course I have an accent when I speak English or French or Spanish, but who doesn't? Most of my teaching experience has taken place at college or university levels. I feel safer not to venture in other areas

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even though my research has been devoted to second-language teaching and teaching methods.

At the university level, second-language teaching is faced with a multitude of institutional and organizational problems about which one could write a book concerning each one of them or talk his breath out. For instance, before you think of launching a new second-language program, you are confronted with the problem of forming a committee, a well-balanced committee with at least one linguist, one specialist in literature, one psychologist, one pedagogue, one sociologist. And you are lucky if you can find a suitable language teacher - maybe two of them, one who represents the tradition of yesterday and one who represents tomorrow's fashion or fancy - to match them all. This committee will produce a feasibility study. You'll have to submit the whole dossier through proper channels for funding, for acceptance. Then, if you are lucky, you'll have permission to commence a pilot program which will be assessed continuously.

During that time you will have had your hands full with the physical organization of second-language teaching: setting up a language lab; choosing the up-to-date material according to your plans; having enough difficulty with the central university administration to get proper classrooms without messing up the perfect schedule you have designed.

Then comes in one of the most important operations you will have to accomplish: staffing your department with the most competent teachers. Setting criteria for selection is not an easy task. You will have to examine their training. You will have to decide if you need Ph.Ds or not. And if so, in what field? The question of tenure will arise if they don't have a Ph.D. I'm not even thinking of what happens if a union steps into the faculty and negotiates a contract; I know too well.

By this time, you're ready to admit students in your program. Do you admit everyone who pounds at your door to get in? Do you admit kids from high school with school-leavers or adults? What does three years of high school French in Alberta mean in comparison with three years of French in Newfoundland schools or a year in Paris? Do you restrict entrance to those who have a "certain knowledge of French"? You are condemned to use placement tests to get a homogeneous class level of knowledge. You may get students ranging from real beginners to Ph.D. candidates.

Your problems seem to have reached an end when everyone has a class, is in the right class, has a teacher...oops! We forgot to choose a teaching method...! This could be dynamite in your

hands, but you will have sooner or later to decide about this important matter if you want peace in the faculty! I do not lament on this job I know too well, because I have been living with it during the last 25 years, and I would rather die than leave it!

There is so much to say on the matter; I must select one or two topics to deal with thoroughly. First, I have chosen to limit my references to two or three universities in Canada or outside Canada, for there seem to be few generalizations possible today with respect to second-language teaching at that level. It seems to be essentially a community or a regional problem. Communities or regions vary greatly and, although it might be useful to know what is going on in other universities, generalizations cannot be made from one university to the next.

Second, I have chosen to examine the question of second-language teaching rather than second-language learning because that aspect is beginning to be neglected in symposia or learned journals.

Third, I will try to limit my very informal remarks to the role of second-language teachers and the changing role of language departments at university level.

The question of teaching should be approached with an open mind and should be evaluated principally in terms of learning, the general atmosphere of the teaching milieu, and the degree of satisfaction of teachers and students. General pedagogical theory established rather clearly some time ago that concepts such as "the ideal teacher," "the ideal method" and "the ideal learning situation" do have a solid basis in reality. Researchers in general didactics as well as in second-language didactics conclude that various kinds of teachers, various kinds of methods, and various sorts of teaching milieus are possible and even desirable and that the result of teaching (learning) has far more to do with appropriate matching between the particular characteristics of the students and the means used by those teaching them with *a priori* models conceived by theoreticians.

All this does not mean that anyone can teach a second language, nor that any method can satisfy learning needs, nor that whatever pedagogical process is used will be acceptable. On the contrary, it means that teaching is essentially a dynamic function which should constantly seek to create the most favourable circumstances for learning, taking into account in the most precise manner possible the learning objectives, the quality of the teacher-student relationship, the effort made by each side, the

time devoted to the operation and the results obtained. Thus it is usually the case that on the part of the teacher, general and specific educational background, experience, a positive attitude, availability, enthusiasm for the field, sincerity and flexibility all play a determining role, while for the students, a sufficient level of aptitude, positive attitudes, determination and personal responsibility *vis-à-vis* the learning task are all important. For adults, the choice of teaching methods is as important as it is for children, but the active participation of students is an absolutely essential condition.

The active participation of students is clearly a function of their degree of freedom in the face of the training they wish to receive and the means to be taken to accomplish it. Any adult who feels compelled to learn something as complex as a second language for reasons, and with methods, which he does not entirely accept is placed in a difficult situation and subjected to considerable risk with respect to his eventual success. Not that he does not desire the security that a structured method and a systematic pedagogical process could provide, but because the instructional procedure does not encourage him to take into his own hands the responsibility for his own success, there is little chance that the bits of learning triggered by the instruction will yield long-term effects outside the classroom. But we will discuss later what is called nowadays "the andragogic approach."

Should I repeat that the success or the failure of bilingual education or second-language learning is determined by numerous factors among which the role played by second-language instructors in creating "the most favourable circumstances for learning" ranks high? In an article published in The Canadian Modern Language Review, October 1976 issue, Lorraine A.Strasheim from Indiana University tries to stress what she thinks a "foreign-language" teacher is today.

She refers to her profession as foreign-language rather than second-language education because she thinks that the term "second-language" implies that the new language is a means toward the same ends the student's native language serves; so long as we make acquiring the new language an end in and of itself, "foreign" is the wiser epithet. If, in the USA, French business courses, Spanish courses for nurses or policemen, and special-interest courses in which the language becomes a means were developed, she would have the right to use "second-language" as a designation for her profession in all honesty and fairness. This statement is in no way an attack on literature offerings, for that type of offering could be one of the special interests students may pursue.

What is a *foreign-language* teacher today, asks Lorraine A. Strasheim. "I tend to define only three basic roles for the foreign-language teacher today - humane model, learning model, and quality control. It seems to me that the designing of instruction, the teaching of culture, the development of communicative competence - and all the other pieces of nitty gritty we can define - can be fit into these three broad areas.

"First, the language teacher must function as a humane model. As teachers have rights, needs, and interests, so do students; 'Whatever is agreed upon as proper to people should be to students!' For instance, the humane model introduces a variety of excursions, activities, and experiences into the language-learning process in an effort to help all students toward integrative motivation, realizing that the students must all be encouraged, not just those who come already motivated and with high aptitude. Language-learning is really what happens outside the textbook. A couple of inside experiences a year will do more to move the class in the direction we desire than any experience ever devised. If language is something that ends when the cover of a book is closed, one can always keep the book until another day - or lose it. The humane model does not set unachievable goals.

"Second, the language teacher must function as a learning model since little of what he or she is teaching was taught during her or his college time. The language teacher must be involved in learning, unlearning and relearning. As Margaret Mead put it, 'We must create new models for adults who can teach their children not what to learn but how to learn and not what they should be committed to but the value of commitment'. Becoming a learning model is more difficult than becoming a language model, but it is also more challenging and more stimulating. Remember, too, a tape recorder can be a language model - only a teacher can be a learning model.

"The teacher's role as quality control may be the most difficult of the three, for we are not discussing the stressing of phonetic perfection or any idealized accuracy on the part of the student. The emphasis here is on controlling the quality of the learning experience. Whatever limits the teacher may define for the extent of the work, he is responsible for maintaining cultural and linguistic authenticity throughout. He is charged with striving to provide learning activities in which students use the language; he has to assure that students are having the best language experience possible, commensurate with their abilities, interests, and age-levels. The quality-control teacher, in short, has to assure that the recruitment slogan

becomes an instructional promise kept."

Lorraine Strasheim's view of her profession is the result of 25 years of teaching experience. In spite of pressures coming from administrative policy, the needs of students, the dictates of "experts," the orders from the union and the unjust judgement of those who represent society or the community, the second-language teacher must not show any sign or irritation, but be a mature person who has some fairly clear idea of what he is aiming at and feels motivated to achieve those objectives.

Whether we agree or not, in 1972, John MacNamara, speaking at an OISE meeting, had this to say on the subject: "To help ensure that teachers work in a mature fashion for a certain set of objectives, it is important that they should have some part in deciding the objectives. This means that it is unwise for administrators to impose upon them. It also means that their professional self-assurance can all unwillingly be robbed from them by persons like myself who come to them as "experts" in some field or other; psychology, sociology, linguistics. The plain truth is that there is no science of language teaching: one might as sensibly expect to find a science of marriage. The teacher, then, is as great an expert as anyone, and should be encouraged to see himself as such." ("The objectives of Bilingual Education in Canada from an English-speaking perspective," in Bilingual Schooling, M. Swain ed.)

I would tend to be very strict, though, on the training an individual should have before I could consider him a full-fledged second-language teacher along MacNamara's approach to the problem. A great number of institutions are becoming very cautious in setting the overall profile of language teachers. For instance, in the recent report of the independent study on the Language Training Programmes of the Public Service of Canada, Volume 1, page 147, this problem arose. The Bibeau team stated: "... but it would seem important for the commission to, as soon as possible, set recruitment standards which are both higher and more specific. These standards should have to do with required previous experience, the disciplines of academic specialization, and the level of previous education."

Requirements relating to teaching experience should not be less than two years, and the level of university education required should be an honors B.A. The disciplines of specialization allowed should include only the following: modern linguistics, learning psychology, the literature of the language taught, language teaching and adult education (andragogy). The ideal profile would, of course, be a balanced blending of these different

disciplines, including approximately a year of linguistics and literature of the language taught, a year of general psychology applied to learning and teaching, and a year of adult education and of second language didactics.

Surely, a second-language teacher at university level should have ideally a Ph.D. or as a minimun an M.A. in applied linguistics or *didactique des langues*, or an M.Ed. on top of the type of B.A. required by the Public Service of Canada. His teaching experience should meet the needs of the changing role of the university language department.

What is this new role a university language department is asked to play? There are various factors affecting the tertiary sector of education today (that is, education beyond school-leaving age) that are bringing about a change in the traditional role of the university department; not all of them, of course, are equally relevant everywhere.

The Declining Interest Among School-Leavers

In North America, and elsewhere, fewer "traditional" students - full-time school-leavers - are registering in a language-literature programme. Norman F. Davies reports the same phenomenon in Sweden. While there are some local factors at work here, the picture is broadly similar everywhere. Among the reasons for this decline, we must in certain universities and countries undoubtedly count:

a) a certain disenchantment among the young with the traditional university education;

b) a growing demand that courses should be strictly vocational;

c) the greatly increased cost of study and the relative diminution of the later financial rewards earned by the academic;

d) a growing graduate unemployment which implies that a university degree no longer guarantees a certain social status;

e) the lack of interest in the humanities shown by politicians; and finally,

f) (in certain areas or regions as in the Quebec region) the

surfeit of trained language teachers replacing the shortage of a few years ago.

In the article written by Lorraine Strasheim, to which I referred earlier, the author reported: "It has been estimated that somewhere around ten percent of our students take the same language in college or university; I would like to offer that other ninety percent a positive, pleasurable and profitable experience. To that end, I have 'trust enough' in their objectives, for what doth it profit a man (or woman) to prepare a course to which nobody comes?"

The Growing Adult Demand

(Norman F. Davies, "The Changing Role of the University Language Department," in *System*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 1977)

"Perhaps paradoxically the above situation is accompanied by a constantly expanding demand from working adults for language training at the university level. The ever internationalization of trade, of political institutions, of professional knowledge, of human contacts in general make communicative ability a necessity for people who earlier had neither the opportunity nor the incentive to follow advanced courses of language instruction. Furthermore, it is part of the democratic movement for equality of opportunity that this should be applied not merely to the young, but also to preceding generations. In keeping with this aim, formal university entrance requirements have been largely abandoned in some universities (in Canada and) in Sweden, for the over-25s.

"Modern society is also of such complexity that a formal education completed in one's twenties cannot be expected to suffice for a lifetime. The principle of lifelong education is therefore now widely accepted, and assures that the adult learner will be a permanent feature of the higher educational scene. The university which gears itself only to the school-leaver will grow increasingly out of touch with the requirements of the society it should serve."

The Demand for Specialized Courses

If there is a change in the type of students in need of language training, there is also a shift in the type of course required. While fewer people are studying language for its own sake, as it were, or for cultural reasons, there seems to be a bottomless market for courses in language for professional use (for instance at Laval, technical, medical, commercial English, sales English). That we should be engaged with such aspects of

language quite as much as with the development of Anglo-Saxon into Middle English is, I think, clear, but to solve the problems involved takes money, time, research and training.

To cater to these new groups of learners, there seem to be three main organizational choices:

1) New institutions, independent of the old, can be created. The British Open University (and la Télé-université de Québec) are the most notable attempts.

2) New sections within existing institutions: for instance, language centres divorced from traditional departments, the latter continuing to serve exclusively the full-time student of Chaucer, Balzac and Chomsky. This seems to be a very common model.

3) Existing institutions widen their field of activity. This is the pattern of distance education in Sweden and Australia and Laval University. For instance, we have our own extra-mural courses and decentralized courses establishing centres in three other towns near Quebec City. All the teaching is done by the department staff. We have not yet achieved a development of correspondence teaching with the use of intensive courses, printed materials, tape cassettes and telephone tutorials. But we have, as in other countries, developed short courses of a more strictly vocational kind, for professional use or many different purposes. The material designed is still unpublished.
For instance, we run a special course in English for medical students, French for CNR executives, English for Bell Canada French Staff in Québec, French for businessmen. Perhaps the most interesting developments in vocational language training I know are the degree courses which integrate language study with vocational subjects. Examples of this, given by Davies in his article, are the Engineering with French and Engineering with German B.Sc. degrees initiated by the University of Bath and the International Economics degree offered by Linköping and three other universities in Sweden. The intention is that the language courses should be closely integrated with the other subjects being studied and should command a close cooperation between the two departments involved.

I suppose "the need for advanced language courses catering

to special requirements is generally accepted." The important question for university language departments or for individual teachers to decide is whether they should play an active role in meeting the challenge or whether they should leave the task to others. There are many advantages to gain if the language departments widen their field of activities - advantages for the student and for the department.

For instance, one can argue that the department remains relevant to the needs of society. This is of considerable importance in these times when universities are often criticized for pursuing their own ends rather than those of society as a whole. The department which is too much out of touch with educational realities will eventually atrophy.

One can also argue that new areas are opened for research of both a theoretical and a practical nature; that the mature student has much more experience of life and often more understanding of literature, for instance. He tends to be highly motivated and is stimulating to work with.

Again one can argue that providing for these new groups emphasizes the pedagogical aspect of university activity and can lead to a pedagogical renewal. Some people have often thought it strange that, while school teachers are expected to undergo pedagogical training, university teachers are not.

Let me end here what would be a long list of advantages and useful feedback for language departments involved in this new role. I sincerely believe, along with Norman F. Davies, that, "unless the university language department is prepared to assume new functions, it may well find itself bypassed, attracting fewer students and less money, with consequent loss of vitality and social significance. Let us instead, with confidence and initiative, welcome the challenge."

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